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SUBJECT: DHI QAR SITREP: REPORT ON FIGHTING IN DHI QAR
PROVINCE BETWEEN JAM AND IRAQI POLICE 05/17/2007 - 2000 HRS

REF: A. BAGHDAD 1606

1B. BAGHDAD 1115

Classified By: Dhi Qar PRT Deputy Team Leader Richard Riley for reasons
1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (U) This is a PRT Dhi Qar cable.

12. (C/REL AUS, UK, USA) Summary: This is the second situation report on fighting in Dhi Qar Province between the Jaish Al-Mahdi (JAM) Militia, the Iraqi Police (IP) and Iraqi Army (IA)(hereinafter referred to collectively as the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF)) and elements of the Badr Corps, which began at approximately 2200 the night of 15 May. The fighting began when Colonel Naji Rostum Sahra Al-Joubir (AKA Abu Liqa), Tactical Support Unit (TSU) Commander, refused to release Kithah R'Sahe who had been arrested on an outstanding warrant for the manufacture of improvised explosive devices. Kithah R'Sahe is a JAM member from the city of Al-Gharaff. Consistent open source reporting indicates that another individual associated with JAM was taken into custody at the same time. During the fighting, the IP, or rather TSU, called the Iraqi Army, under the command of BRIG Saad, for assistance. With the assistance of the IA, the ISF secured the city of Nassiriyah and proceeded to rout JAM members in the city, going from house to house looking for JAM members, forcing a number of them to quit the city. Reporting from the city of Suq Al-Shuyukh indicates that JAM was able to gain control of at least some police check points in the city with little resistance from the IP, and that the JAM was also able to take control of the IP check point on Alternate Supply Route (ASR) Dallas near Suq al-Shuyukh, thus controlling a main thoroughfare between Basrah and Nassiriyah. A ceasefire has been in effect in the city of Nassiriyah as of early morning May 16, 2007 (See ref. A). End Summary.

13. (S/REL AUS, UK, USA) Beginning at approximately 2200 hours on night of May 15, 2007, elements of the JAM, ISF and Badr Corps engaged in battle in Nassiriyah, capital of Dhi Qar province, as well as the city of Al-Shatrah, located approximately 52 KM north of Nassiriyah. The battle started when the IP served an arrest warrant on Kithah R'Sahe, a known JAM member from the city of Al-Gharaff, and according to consistent open source reporting, one other JAM member as well for suspicion of manufacturing IEDs. The prisoner(s) was transported to the TSU holding facility in Nassiriyah under the command of Abu Liqa (who is known to be affiliated with SIIC/Badr). At that point, JAM members approached Abu Liqa and demanded the release of their JAM colleague(s). Abu Liqa reportedly summarily denied JAM's demand. The JAM then mounted an attack on the TSU, located in downtown Nassiriyah, using RPGs and small arms fire. (Comment: Previous reporting that Abu Liqa was wounded or killed in that exchange was incorrect. It was Colonel Jawad of the Iraqi Anti-Terrorism Unit (ATU) who sustained a life-threatening injury to his neck during the battle. As of now, Jawad has been transported to a municipal hospital in Basrah and is receiving treatment there in the ICU. (See ref. A). End

comment) The attack escalated into a general confrontation between JAM, the ISF, and the Badr Corps in Nassiriyah. During the course of the evening, the ISF and the Badr Corps routed JAM elements in Nassiriyah going from house to house of suspected JAM members forcing them to leave the city. There were also reports of hostilities in the cities of Suq Al-Shuyukh and Al-Shatrah, with JAM taking over some security checkpoints in Suq al-Shuyukh, with minimal to no resistance from IP elements manning those positions.

¶4. (S/REL AUS, UK, USA) All sides sustained casualties, but accurate figures are not yet known. An estimate of the total casualties based on open source reporting places the total number killed at around 15, and the total number wounded at around 80. Coalition Forces were contacted by the provincial government with a request for possible assistance with the casualties as they reportedly number too many to be handled by the central hospital. On May 17 at 1900 hours, nine IP casualties were transferred to Tallil Air Base Combat Support Hospital (CSH) with gun shot wounds and signs of torture. Two of these had been taken hostage by JAM and showed signs of being tortured prior to being released as part of the ceasefire arrangements negotiated by Dhi Qar Vice Governor Ahmed al-Sheikh Taha (Da'wa). Colonel Jawad remains in a municipal hospital in Basrah under armed guard and assumed name. He may be transferred to the Tallil CSH on May 18, 2007 provided that his medical condition has stabilized. The other reason casualties were transferred to the Tallil CSH is that the Ministry of Health is under control of OMS and the ISF and Badr Corps fear retribution on these casualties.

¶5. (S/REL AUS, UK, USA) A ceasefire has been in effect in the city of Nassiriyah as of early morning May 16, 2007. That ceasefire was reportedly negotiated by Vice Governor Ahmed

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al-Sheikh Taha (Da'wa), and unidentified JAM leaders. (Comment: It is probable that the unidentified JAM leaders included Sheikh Ahmed Al-Kafaji) JAM Division Commander for Dhi Qar Province, Sheikh Aws Al-Kafaji) Senior JAM liaison to the Baghdad JAM (we believe) and prominent JAM leader in Dhi Qar Province) close associate of Ahmed (See ref. B), and Abu Maki who has resurfaced recently in Dhi Qar as prominent in JAM leadership for Dhi Qar Province, possible new Division Commander. End comment.) In addition, opens source reporting indicates that Ayatollah Mohammed Yaqobi, the head of the Fadilah party, and Moqtada Al-Sadr took a direct hand in the ceasefire negotiations, though we have no confirmation of this from reliable sources. The terms of the ceasefire included the release of Kithah R'Sahe from TSU custody, and the return of the ISF as well as some Badr Corps hostages that JAM took during the battle. An interlocutor who spoke with Abu Liqa last night reported that Abu Liqa is satisfied with the terms, and feels that the ISF "made their point" with JAM. Sensitive reporting indicates that JAM may be attempting to regroup its forces, and attempt a counterattack in the near future to regain the ground, if not the prestige, that they have lost in this recent engagement.

¶6. (C/REL AUS, UK, USA) The events in Suq Al-Shuyukh still need to be better clarified. Several events have hampered clear communication with Coalition assets in that city. However, it appears on the morning of May 16, JAM members were able to take control of at least some IP checkpoints in the city. There are reports that some IP members doffed their IP uniforms to reveal JAM uniforms underneath. In addition, it also appears that JAM was able to take over the IP checkpoint on ASR Jackson near Suq Al-Shuyukh, and hold it for a significant period of time. The current status of those checkpoints is not known at this time. In addition, JAM members from Suq Al-Shuyukh were reported to be mobilizing for possible JAM activity, or a possible counter attack in the near future.

¶7. (C/REL AUS, UK, USA) The city of Al-Shatrah appears to be serving as a form of JAM redoubt in this conflict. (Comment:

Al-Shatrah is a known JAM stronghold. End comment) There is no new reported fighting in that city. Approximately 200 JAM members rallied in the city on May 17 in a funeral procession. We believe that given the heavy JAM presence in the procession, the funeral was for a JAM member killed in the conflict.

¶18. (S/REL AUS, UK, USA) The performance of the IP, at least in Suq al-Shuyukh and possibly elsewhere, was very disappointing to say the least, given the number of IP who refused to engage the JAM at all, or in the worst case, donned JAM uniforms to actively fight for the JAM. This indicates a potentially high level of infiltration by JAM members into that organization. We believe if it were not for the intervention of the Iraqi Army, the IP could not have sustained the battle. Coalition military also give the TSU and ATU high marks for their performance against the JAM. In the case of the TSU and ATU, it is possible their good performance is due at least in part to the fact that those organizations are believed to be heavily staffed by Badr Corps members.

¶19. (S/REL AUS, UK, USA) Another interesting footnote to this exchange was the absence of Governor Azziz Kadthum Alwan Al-Ogheli during the entire exchange. We believe it is possible that he knew in advance that the TSU was going to execute the warrant, and either instructed Abu Liqa to execute it while he was on a medical trip to Italy, or purposefully timed his trip to Italy to coincide with that event so that he could distance himself from the probable consequences. In any event, analysts on Tallil AB believe that Governor Alwan by his absence in effect gave Abu Liqa (and General Saad) a free hand to deal with the warrant and its consequences as they saw fit) a license to go after the JAM in other words.

¶10. (U) We will continue to provide updates if the situation deteriorates.
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